

VZCZCXRO8696
OO RUEHPA
DE RUEHOS #0302/01 1970647
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 160647Z JUL 09
FM AMCONSUL LAGOS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0878
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 0466
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE
RUZEJAA/JAC MOLESWORTH AFB UK
RHMFISS/COMUSNAVEUR NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000302

SIPDIS

STATE PASS FOR USAID/AFR/WA, AFR/SD, AND EGAT MOTT
STATE PASS TO USTR-AGAMA
DOC FOR 3317/ITA/OA/KBURRESS AND 3130/USFC/OIO/ANESA/DHARRIS
TREASURY FOR PETERS AND HALL
COMUSNAVEUR FOR ANAGGIAR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/30/2019
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KCOR](#) [KCRM](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: NIGER DELTA: ELEMENTS OF THE MOVEMENT FOR THE EMANCIPATION
OF THE
NIGER DELTA (MEND) DECLARES CEASE-FIRE, BUT WANTS TO NEGOTIATE
AMNESTY TEAMS

REF: A. ABUJA 1226
[1](#)B. ABUJA 1173
[1](#)C. ABUJA 1132
[1](#)D. ABUJA 1102
[1](#)E. ABUJA 1278

Classified By: Consul General Donna Blair, Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Elements of the so-called Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta" (MEND), a loose coalition of armed groups partly responsible for disrupting oil-production and kidnappings in the Niger Delta over the last several years, declared a cease-fire effective July 15. MEND's statement does not represent acceptance of the GON's amnesty offer of June 25, but is allegedly designed to give MEND time to "consult" with relevant stakeholders and put together a team that will convey MEND's "demands" to the GON. It is, however, unclear who MEND represents since prominent figures in the Niger Delta vehemently deny association with MEND and expressed concerns that any negotiations conducted by MEND with the GON would only serve to secure the personal and political future of those at the negotiating table while neglecting the real needs of the people of the Niger Delta. Post shares the concern that without addressing the root causes of the unrest, underdevelopment and environmental degradation, negotiations between the GON and militant leaders will produce a phony peace. A new generation of young men will take up a life of sabotage and kidnapping, confident that they can force the government to grant them amnesty. Meanwhile, the current generation of politicians and "reformed" militants will continue to accumulate wealth by other unscrupulous means in order to ensure victory in the next sham elections. End Summary.

GON Releases Okah; MEND To Talk

[1](#)2. (C) The ceasefire agreed to by elements of MEND is allegedly a response to the release on July 13 under the terms of the GON's June 25 amnesty offer to Niger Delta

militants (Reftels A-D) of Henry Okah, a man linked to a faction of MEND, and variously described as a leader or a chief arms supplier, who was on trial for treason and gun running (Reftel E). The ceasefire by this element of MEND is to last for 60 days and so would expire prior to the deadline for amnesty set by President Yar'Adua of October 4, 2009.

Negotiations Not Amnesty

¶3. (C) The ceasefire announced by MEND's Okah supporters by its spokesman Jomo Gbomo does not represent the acceptance of the GON's amnesty offer issued June 25. In a press statement Jomo Gbomo stated that the cease-fire will be used to put together a team of "wise men and women," who will consult with relevant stakeholders and then present their "demands" to the Government of Nigeria. Gbomo also stated that the withdrawal of the military Joint Task Force (JTF) from the Gbaramatu Kingdom was a precondition of a negotiated settlement.

Who Does MEND Represent?

¶4. (C) President of the Ijaw Youth Council, Dr. Chris Ekiyor, speaking to PolOff in Lagos on July 15 stressed that any element of MEND does not speak for the Ijaw people, who are represented instead by the Ijaw Youth and the Ijaw National Councils. He said these councils will meet tomorrow to hammer out a position and also to coordinate with other

LAGOS 00000302 002.3 OF 002

youth organizations. Rex Anighoro, a close associate of Dukobo Asari, leader of the Niger Delta Peoples' Volunteer Force, reported to PolOff that neither Henry Okah nor any element of MEND can speak for all the militant groups, but admitted that Okah is in talks with Asari, "Boyloaf," "Tompson" and other prominent militant commanders. He believes agreement with these leaders is possible.

A Deal Among Thieves

¶5. (C) Both Ekiyor and Anighoro expressed concern that a "deal" may be in the making which will protect the political and personal interests of those parties involved in the negotiating process, i.e. the GON and the militant leaders, but not address the root causes of the conflict, namely underdevelopment and environmental degradation. Ekiyor vowed that, if the government did a deal with MEND which merely enabled all parties continue their illegal bunkering without addressing the plight of the people in the Niger Delta, Niger Delta youth would organize mass, peaceful demonstrations and make the region "ungovernable." Anighoro said that any failure to address the root causes of the unrest would force the people of the Niger Delta to "continue the struggle" by other means, but felt there was a hope for peace if all parties could be brought into the negotiating process.

¶6. (C) Comment: First of all, it is not clear who Jomo Gbomo speaks for. Certainly, it is questionable whether he speaks for other MEND elements such as Tompolo and his followers, thought to be responsible for the most recent attacks on oil infrastructure. Second, we have seen several ceasefires in recent years. They are typically nothing more than a tacit and temporary agreement by Nigerian security forces and "militants" to stop shooting at each other for a while, and get back to the business of stealing oil, kidnapping oil workers, and, during the election season, intimidating voters. On talk of negotiations between the GON and militant leaders (whether represented by MEND or not), we cannot help but wonder if a deal will result in nothing more than a phony peace. No matter how many prominent "militant" leaders lay down their arms and accept amnesty and

no matter how far the JTF is withdrawn, without a broad and effective campaign to address the grinding poverty, environmental degradation, and political alienation of those living in the midst of the country's oil wealth, the situation is bound to deteriorate again in a short period of time. Some youth leaders may seek to "continue the struggle" by peaceful means, but a more likely scenario is that a new generation of young men will take up sabotage and kidnapping as a way of making a living, confident that they can force the government to grant them amnesty in the future simply by being bold enough. In any case, newly "reformed" militants may quickly revert to their old ways as their politician patrons seek to organize their thugs and build up their war chest through illegal oil bunkering operations in advance of the 2011 elections. End Comment.

17. (U) This cable has been cleared by Embassy Abuja.

BLAIR